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USSR Weekly Review

22 December 1977

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USSR WEEKLY REVIEW

22 December 1977

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This publication is prepared by the USSR Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. The views presented are the personal judgments of analysts on significant events or trends in Soviet foreign and domestic affairs. Although the analysis centers on political matters, it discusses politically relevant economic or strategic trends when appropriate. Differences of opinion are sometimes aired to present consumers with a range of analytical views. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to

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The Soviet Neutron Bomb Campaign

The recent public Soviet campaign against West European defense policies has been pegged to the issue of deployment of the "neutron bomb" and has been accompanied by an orchestrated pattern of private Soviet diplomatic representations at the highest levels. These extensive Soviet efforts seem aimed at preventing production and deployment in Western Europe of the proposed new reduced blast/enhanced radiation weapon. But they also serve other, more tactical Soviet purposes: playing up divisiveness within NATO (both within individual countries and between the US and some of its European allies), diverting attention from the human rights issue at the CSCE Review Conference and from the Soviet military threat in Europe, and lessening the chances that the West will use the neutron bomb as a bargaining lever in the MBFR talks or elsewhere.

Scope and Intensity

The recent Soviet campaign approximates the high intensity of the first neutron bomb campaign, which was undertaken last July and sustained through most of August. The use of public appeals, the declaration of a special protest week last summer, the support claimed on behalf of numerous Western Communist parties, and the large volume of Soviet verbiage are reminiscent of the large-scale postwar "ban-the-bomb" appeal of Stalin's time.

Both in the summer and at the present time the Soviet effort has been worldwide. The success of the propaganda attempts has been uneven, however, since the neutron bomb is not of deep public concern in most places outside Europe,

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Private Demarches

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the current campaign has been the strongly worded approaches made by key Soviet leaders to top West European political figures in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia. Most recently, on 6 December, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin upbraided the prime ministers and foreign ministers of the five Nordic powers (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland) during the celebrations commemorating the 60th anniversary of Finnish independence. Kosygin complained to the assembled ministers that Norway's defense policy showed signs of aggressiveness and that FRG troops had taken part in military maneuvers on Norwegian soil. He also expressed displeasure at criticism of the USSR that he said had appeared in the Norwegian press and, growing increasingly irritated as he went on, pressed the Norwegian Prime Minister on his country's attitude toward the neutron bomb. He heatedly urged the group to "distance themselves" from any association with the weapon and to condemn it. Kosygin also denounced what he termed "unrealistic" Western fears of the East and expounded at length on Soviet arms control and disarmament aims. The vehemence of his diatribe

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contributed to the incident becoming a news item several days later in the Scandinavian press.

There is little doubt that Kosygin's unprecedented lecturing was a deliberate attempt to get the Scandinavian leaders to think twice about their defense postures generally and their attitudes toward participation in NATO in particular. Three of the five countries addressed are NATO members, and the incident occurred on the eve of the regular major December ministerial NATO gatherings in Belgium.

The vehemence of Kosygin's demarche may have been in part due to circumstances of the moment: the denial to

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buttals of the Nordic ministers he was trying to browbeat; and perhaps the news of the death that day of his wartime comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union Vasilevsky. In light of the other pointed approaches the Soviets made last month, however, the subject, slant, and even the hectoring tone of Kosygin's words fit a purposeful pattern.

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[REDACTED]

The French were approached in Moscow and Berlin.

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not to allow European deployment of the neutron bomb, and the weapon was sharply criticized by host Soviet officials.

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Finally, in early October, the Soviets, following earlier public indications in their propaganda, formally raised the issue of the neutron bomb in their arms limitations talks with the US regarding radiological weapons, alleging that it is a new weapon of mass destruction. (The US rejected this position since nuclear explosives are not supposed to be included in these talks, and the impasse continues. These talks will resume next year.)

The diplomatic attacks are a new facet of the Soviet policy on the neutron bomb going beyond the public and unofficial approaches that marked the intensive July-August

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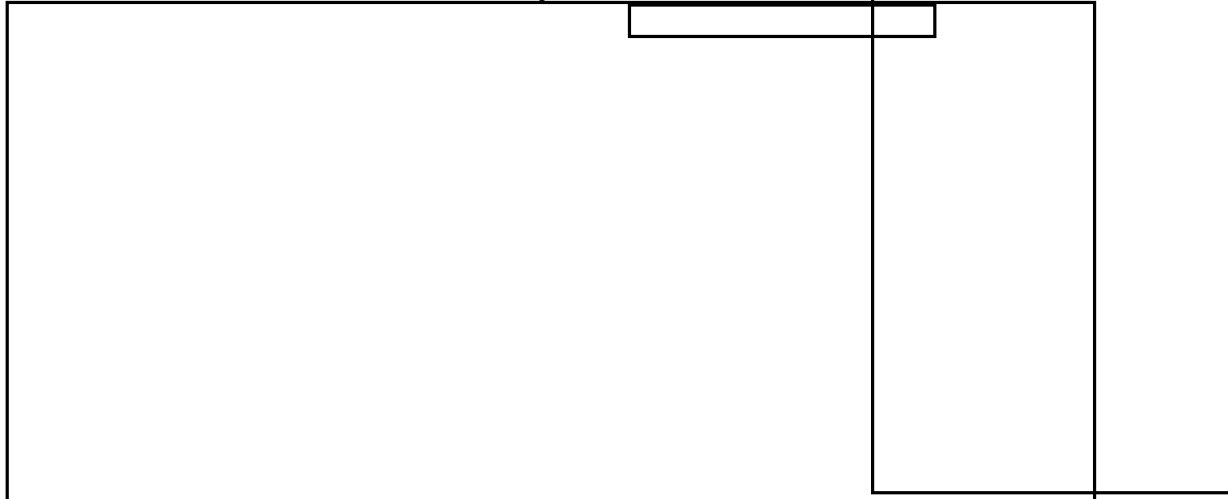
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Soviet campaign centered on this issue. At that time, for example, a Soviet journalist warned [redacted] that Brezhnev personally was watching the West German reaction to the neutron bomb and that the Federal Republic's acceptance of stockpiling the weapon on German territory could have a negative impact on Moscow's relationship with Bonn.

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One notable aspect of these recent private statements is the Soviet willingness to criticize one state in talking with representatives of another. The basic division the Soviets are trying to create by their campaign wedge is between the US and its European NATO allies.

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It is not readily apparent just why the Soviets have undertaken these extraordinary private demarches, or why they have done this so vehemently that their listeners are left annoyed. The most likely explanation is that they want to make their point while Western governmental decisions on the issue are still pending. Another factor is simply that this kind of blunt approach is the normal Soviet style.

Public Themes

The themes pursued in the public part of the recent Soviet campaign against the neutron bomb have shifted somewhat since the summer attacks. A focal point then was a possible US decision to produce the weapon. Accordingly, criticism was directed at the President and his

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administration, and the issue was presented as a "touchstone" for testing US good will. Since then as the US and its West European allies in effect wait for each other to make the initial decision (for us, to decide whether to produce it; for them, whether to assure us they will agree to its deployment in Europe), the Soviets have aimed their campaign increasingly at the West Europeans. They are obviously playing upon adverse reaction to the weapon in West Europe. The general picture presented by Soviet propaganda is one of the Pentagon pressing the President and key NATO allies for a green light on production and of the reluctant West Europeans resisting this pressure.

Another theme that appeared first in the Western press but has been picked up by Soviet accounts is that the neutron bomb may be used by the West as a bargaining chip in talks with Moscow. This probably reflects a genuine Soviet concern. The references are usually connected with the MBFR talks, although the Soviets are careful not to specify any military asset on their side that might logically be the target of such usage of the neutron bomb. (Since the neutron bomb was developed particularly for countering a Soviet armored offensive, tanks would perhaps be a likely trade-off item. A Soviet military expert, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] has indicated Moscow might be willing to reduce its ground forces superiority in Central Europe in exchange for curtailed deployment of the neutron bomb.) At least one Soviet account has left open the question of where the neutron bomb leverage might be applied, referring to SALT as well as MBFR.

The Soviets have also charged in a recent broadcast to Southeast Asia that the Chinese leaders have "seriously discussed" manufacture of their own neutron bomb. Noting that the weapon is intended for possible use in relatively densely populated areas, the Soviet broadcast concluded that the Chinese must be planning to aim the bomb at heavily inhabited south and southeast Asia.

Some themes struck in the recent campaign were part of the earlier one as well. The Soviets have threatened to counter the weapon if it is produced and deployed. Most Soviet accounts assert that the Soviets can produce their own similar weapon. Kosygin, for example, reportedly

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told [] "We can build our own neutron bomb in zero time if we wish." Other accounts leave ambiguous just how the Soviets would choose to counter NATO deployment, but technically, it is believed that the Soviets could develop and eventually deploy such a weapon.

The Soviets have sought to counter the argument made by some of the weapon's proponents that it is a defensive weapon most likely to be used in Western Europe to stem a Soviet armored assault. The president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, in a speech early in October, claimed that the neutron bomb was without doubt an offensive weapon. Some public Soviet commentary has asserted that its intended targets are "probably" the USSR and other East European countries.

Finally, the Soviets have warned that a variety of dire consequences could follow a Western decision to produce and deploy the neutron bomb. Soviet accounts have charged that the MBFR talks or SALT would be adversely affected, and one Soviet domestic broadcast attributed to a foreign source the opinion that neutron bomb production would infringe on the letter and the spirit of the CSCE Final Act. One TASS account contended that the weapon would destabilize the military situation in Europe.

Soviet Concerns and Purposes

Moscow may see the neutron bomb as somewhat more effective than existing weapons in military-technical terms, but probably more important to the Soviets are its politico-military aspects. A Western decision to produce or deploy the weapon would in itself be taken by the Soviets as an indication of strengthened Western resolve. Also, the Soviets would worry that deployment would lead to a greater willingness by Western political leaders to resort to use of nuclear weapons in response to a Soviet attack. Moscow might conclude that the West, believing its deterrent to Soviet attack has been strengthened, would gain confidence in facing the Soviet military threat in Europe. The purpose of the weapon in the judgment of its proponents in the West, after all, is to make more feasible its use or the threat of its use,

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especially in West Europe, by reducing the unwanted collateral effects of those nuclear weapons deemed necessary for stopping Soviet armor (thus the "reduced blast" part of the weapon's official Western designation). Georgy Arbatov, one of Moscow's top US-watchers, has told [redacted] [redacted] there is sincere concern in responsible Soviet circles that the weapon would lower the nuclear threshold in Europe.

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Aside from this important politico-military concern, Soviet purposes in mounting the anti-bomb campaign are largely tactical or simply propagandistic. The public campaign is meant to affect the political environment in which Western government leaders are considering decisions about the weapon, and the private demarches were clearly timed to influence the December NATO meetings. From the Soviet viewpoint the campaign has the virtue of focusing attention on a Western defense issue that had already aroused genuine public opposition and that is easily exploitable by emotional propaganda. For the Soviets the neutron bomb is a particularly attractive object of public criticism because the West has as yet made no decision on its development, and it is still a political issue provoking controversy within and among NATO countries.

The cruise missile, which seems at present to be an attractive option to all the major NATO powers (although no basic decisions on it have yet been made either) and which lacks the emotional resonance of the neutron bomb as a public issue, has not been a target of the recent Soviet campaign. In the wake of the President's B-1 decision on 30 June, the Soviets attacked the cruise missile publicly for a couple of weeks, but then shifted to the neutron bomb as by far the more exploitable issue. Although the Soviets have since criticized the cruise missile, privately and publicly, far more of their propaganda resources have been concentrated on the neutron bomb.

This focus on the neutron bomb, the Soviets evidently feel, conveniently shifts Western public attention away from current Soviet defense measures, such as deployment of the SS-20 IRBM, and from the Soviet military threat in Europe generally. The Soviets also probably believe that the campaign will support their effort at the CSCE

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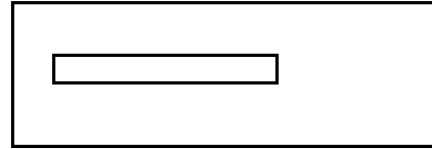
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Review Conference to shift attention from human rights to measures related to "military detente." In addition, the campaign fits in well with the standard Soviet protestations of Moscow's interest in disarmament and with Soviet charges of Western "militarism."

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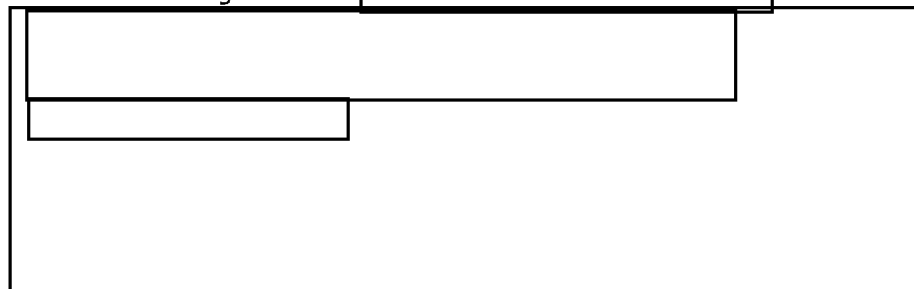
Soviet Arms Trade Negotiators Include Masters of the Art

The Soviet Government sent a high-powered, experienced delegation to the initial session of the US-USSR Consultations on Limitation of the International Arms Trade held last week (14-16 December) in Washington. The 10 members included several high-ranking military officers with first-hand knowledge of arms transfers and related negotiations. The delegation was led by a civilian, Oleg Khlestov, who heads the Foreign Ministry's Treaty and Legal Department. Khlestov, who led the Soviet delegation to the MBFR talks during 1973-76, is a master of procedural maneuvers that tend to prolong negotiations. He has previously dealt with US officials on Law of the Sea, air piracy, and narcotic drug control.

At least four of the officers on the delegation can be linked with organizations that plan and implement Soviet military and economic assistance programs--the Soviet General Staff's Main Military Assistance Directorate (10th Directorate) and the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations (GKES). The 10th Directorate is responsible for the policy and planning of the Soviet military assistance program, and the GKES administers and implements the Soviet foreign economic and military aid program as a whole.

Those known to have been involved in Soviet arms programs include:

-- Lieutenant General Pavel Galkin, the highest ranking military member of the delegation.



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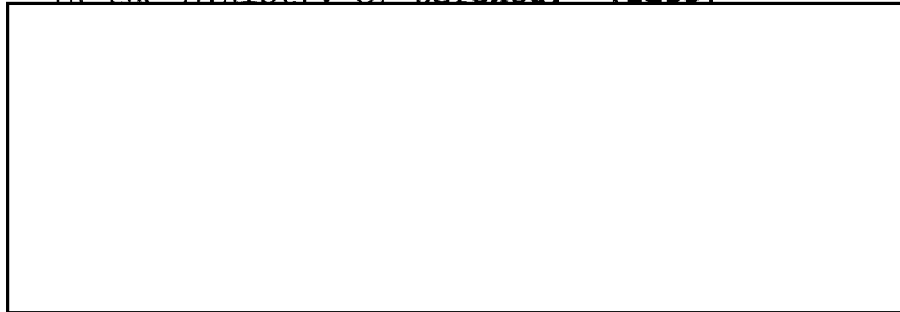
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- Rear Admiral Valentin Vlasov, who may
now be assigned to the General Staff
in the Ministry of Defense. Vlasov



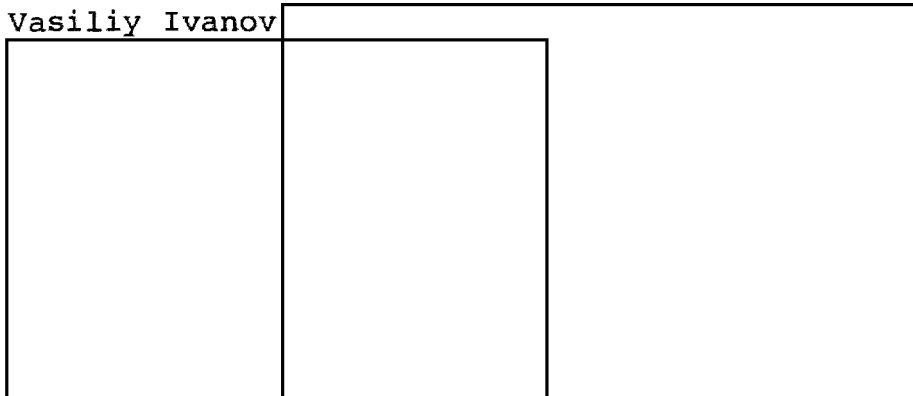
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- Colonel Engineer Nikolay Yeremichev,



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- Vasiliy Ivanov



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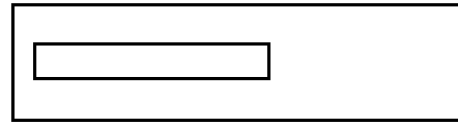
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Reading the Berlin Barometer

Berlin often acts as a barometer of Soviet-US relations. When these relations are strained, Moscow pursues its objectives more aggressively--and also allows East Germany to act more assertively. When US-Soviet relations are in tune, Moscow is inclined to be more cooperative on Berlin issues.

The storm warnings that appeared on the Berlin barometer earlier this year have subsided, but the issues that caused them have not been resolved. Some of these issues are vital to Berlin's status and may trigger sharp disputes in the coming year, regardless of the climate of US-Soviet relations.

The following is a status report on some of the problems that might cause renewed difficulties with Moscow over Berlin.

West Berlin's ties with West Germany. The most contentious provision of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, signed in 1971, involves West Berlin's political status and its relationship with West Germany. Compromise language about "normal ties" is intended to paper over the gap between West German claims that West Berlin is West Germany's 10th state and the Soviet contention that the Western sectors compose a "special political entity" that conducts relations with West Germany as though the latter were a foreign power.

Issues are constantly arising to challenge this vague arrangement. Soviet objections to various West German political actions in Berlin which seem to affirm German unity are by now routine. West German federal participation in the prosecution of extremist kidnapers in West Berlin (the Lorenz case) is one current area of dispute. On another front, the Soviets have criticized a recent West German high court decision that upheld the legality of contracts relating to the exfiltration (conducted as a private commercial venture) of East German citizens via the transit routes to and from Berlin that were established for the regulated use of West German

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citizens under the 1971 agreement. A further Soviet response on this issue could complicate affairs for West Berlin as well as affect relations between West and East Germany. A separate category could be set aside for recurring Soviet (and East German) protests over West German representation of West Berlin within international organizations and for purposes of negotiation and travel regulation. These objections reflect a reading of the Quadripartite Agreement by the Soviets which the Western Allies deem a deliberate misinterpretation aimed at curbing West Berlin's economic and political development.

Integration of East Berlin into East Germany. One of the basic disagreements between the Soviets and the Western Allies is over the concept of Greater Berlin as a single city under quadripartite administration. The Soviets and East Germans contend that Greater Berlin no longer exists and that the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement has to do only with West Berlin. To reinforce this point, East Berlin persistently (and with international acceptance) proclaims itself the capital city of the German Democratic Republic. Unilateral measures have been taken to mark the boundary between East and West Berlin as an international frontier rather than the dividing lines between zones in an occupied city. In addition, border markings between East Berlin and East Germany were removed in early 1977 in an effort to erase the distinctions between East Berlin and East Germany. Despite these efforts to make it appear that East Berlin is an integral part of East Germany, the Allies continue to send flag patrols into East Berlin.

Flag tours and passport challenges. The free access to and circulation through East Berlin of US and other Allied military vehicles is the most conspicuous (and indeed, the only) outward sign of the eastern sector's four-power status. During the spring of 1977, a Soviet demarche calling for the end of these regular travels, known as flag tours, was presented in Allied capitals. A series of incidents of harassment and complaint related to the tours occurred around the same time.

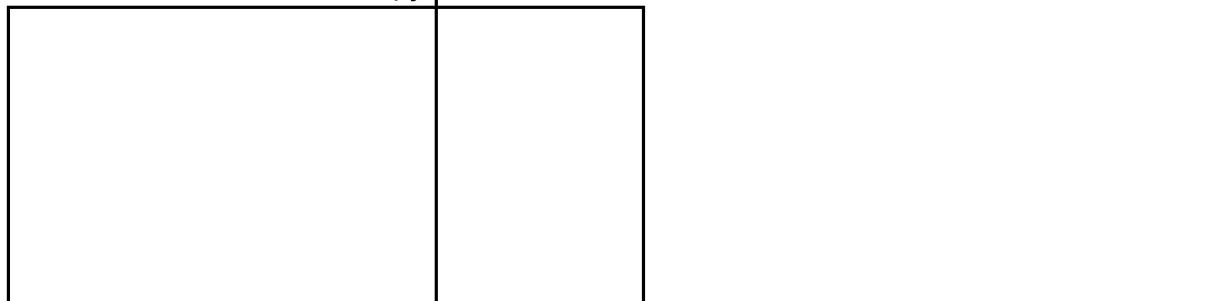
In May, the Allied heads of government met in London and issued a strong declaration on their continuing commitment to Berlin. The Soviets then dropped their earlier insistence that the flag tour issue required quick resolution, and instead appeared to concentrate on the rights of their own flag patrols in West Berlin, which

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became more numerous.



Early in September, East German sector guards at the Friedrichstrasse (Checkpoint Charlie) crossing point began demanding that holders of US diplomatic passports also display East German visas when entering East Berlin. Existing practice requires only that such persons "flash" the identification pages and cover of their diplomatic passports from inside their vehicles, a procedure the US proposes to defend in order to avoid recognizing East German sovereignty over East Berlin. The visa challenges by the guards, who cited new regulations effective 1 September, were intermittent, and the standard refusal to comply involved at most a few minutes' wait before the barrier was lifted. During the last two weeks in November, no such challenges took place, possibly due to a US protest delivered to the Soviets on 10 November.

West Berlin's relations with the European Community. One prominent factor in West Berlin's economic and political evolution is the city's link with the European Community. By the required Allied enactment, the provisions of the Treaty of Rome that set up the EC were extended to West Berlin at the very outset in 1957. The Soviets do not now contest the fact that West Berlin's economy is inseparably linked to that of the EC. Where Moscow now hesitates is the point at which the EC, through the institution of the European Parliament, is seeking to achieve political as well as economic integration for Western Europe, including West Berlin.

West Berlin's right to be represented in the first directly elected European Parliament in 1978 is likely to rise to the top of the Soviet agenda on Berlin. High-level exchanges with Moscow are already taking place on this issue, with no clear resolution in sight. Subject to the overall uncertainties of scheduling the elections, now tentatively set for May or June, further diplomatic movement on this issue can be expected.

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If the East German response to the inclusion of West Berlin deputies in the new European Parliament consists of excluding these individuals from ground transit routes and brief general disruption of travel between West Germany and West Berlin, this will mean little departure from past measures in comparable situations. Any East German action, however, would have to be approved beforehand by the Soviets. If steps that go beyond this are taken, the status of West Berlin and preservation of the Quadripartite Agreement could become serious concerns during the coming year.

Air corridors. The Soviets claim that the sole purpose of the Allied air corridors to Berlin, provided under a 1946 occupation agreement, is to resupply the Allied garrisons in the city. Any other use that does not acknowledge East German sovereignty over the air lanes is regarded by the Soviets as illegal, and Moscow has for years disclaimed any responsibility for accidents or near misses that might occur. As use of the air corridors has steadily expanded beyond this claimed restriction, the ritual of Soviet objection and disclaimer, issued through the four-power Berlin Air Safety Center, has become familiar. But with the adoption and observance of the Quadripartite Agreement, the likelihood of actual Soviet interference with peaceful navigation in the air corridors has receded even further. Near misses with Soviet aircraft may be pointed reminders, but Allied complaints have at times brought forth Soviet apologies for pilot error or indiscipline.

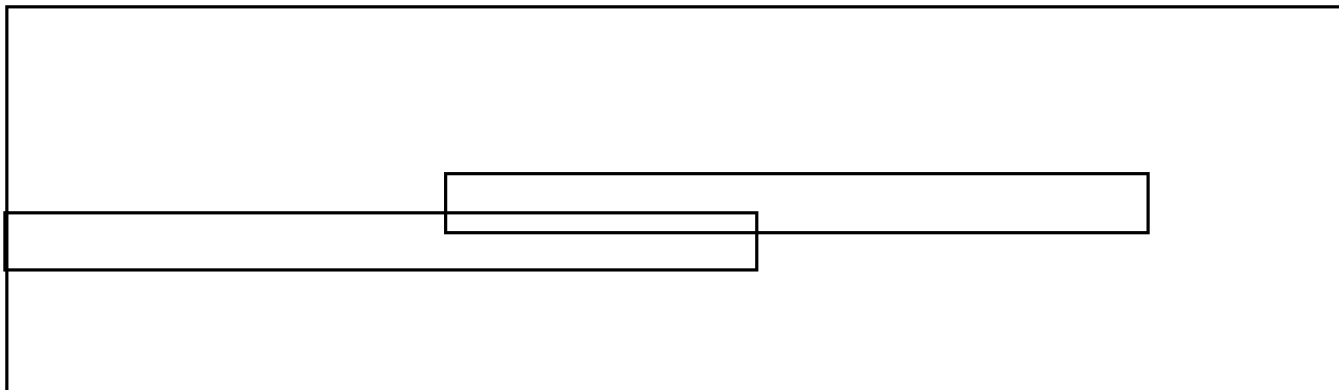
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Reichsbahn tariffs. In November 1976, the East German railway system, which retains the traditional German title of Reichsbahn, announced that the tariffs charged for the customary provision of East German locomotives for Allied trains to and from West Berlin would be increased as of 1 February 1977. Under current arrangements, an increase in rates must be agreed upon between the Reichsbahn and the West German railway system, the Bundesbahn. Talks aimed at completing such an agreement between the two state-run railways have hardly moved off dead center. The Soviets have several times protested the delay to the Allies, whom they deem technically responsible for what is in fact West German foot-dragging. Further delay in the negotiations could create problems in rail transit between West Germany and West Berlin.

Wildcard factors. West Berlin is facing significant social and cultural problems. Such factors as ethnic conflict focusing on a growing Turkish and Pakistani community, student unrest, anarchist provocations, or incidents of international terrorism, combined with the constant proximity of the opposing forces, could produce a strange mix and involve the US and the Soviets in some unforeseen chain of events. Such factors, along with the continual awareness of Berlin's availability as a pressure point whenever Soviet-American relations suffer a sharp reversal, serve as a reminder of how quickly Berlin can be catapulted once again into the main arena of world conflict.

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